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FM AMCONSUL LAGOS
TO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA PRIORITY 8242
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8408
INFO RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 0095
RUEHCD/AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ 0071
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 0078
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 0093
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH AFB UK
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000047

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DOE FOR GPERSON, CGAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS, SRENENDER, DFIELDS
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS USTR FOR ASST USTR FLISER
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART
STATE PASS TDA FOR NCABOT
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ
STATE PASS DS/IP/AF, DS/IP/ITA, DS/ICI/PII

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/23/2017

TAGS: [EPET](#) [ENERG](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [CASC](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: 1 AMERICAN, 1 BRITON TAKEN HOSTAGE IN PORT HARCOURT

REF: LAGOS 00038

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Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) Summary: American citizen Billy Ray Graham and Briton Neil Robert Mirrlees were kidnapped going to work at approximately 7:00 AM on January 23 in Port Harcourt. Graham and Mirrlees work for Pivot Engineering Company Ltd., a small oil service firm. A Port Harcourt police contact said a group claiming to be the kidnappers has reportedly requested a naira 1.8 billion (approximately USD 14 million) ransom. The hostages reportedly are in good health and unharmed. End Summary.

12. (C) U.S. citizen Billy Ray Graham and Briton Neil Robert Mirrlees were on their way to work at 7:00 AM January 23 when kidnapped in Port Harcourt. A Port Harcourt senior police contact told Regional Security Officer (RSO) a group of young men traveling in two cars committed the kidnapping. No shots were fired and no one was injured, according to reports. Legatt spoke to Graham's wife who said shortly after the kidnapping Graham called her and said he and Mirrlees were being taken out of Port Harcourt via speedboat for an undisclosed location in the riverine/creek area of the state. According to the wives, neither Graham nor Mirrlees are on medication and both are in good health.

13. (C) RSO's police contact said a reliable source within the Rivers State Government has made contact with the group holding the two hostages. The group has reportedly requested a ransom of naira 1.8 billion (approximately USD 14 million).

14. (C) Graham and Mirrlees work for Pivot Engineering Company Ltd., a joint venture partner with Petroleum Geo-Services (PGS) in Rivers State. Shell, Total and Chevron have all indicated that Pivot is not currently under contract with them. Chevron representatives did say, however, the company is well-known to them.

15. (C) Isaac Ijayi, a Pivot employee in the company's Lagos office, indicated that the company's security firm had been in touch with Nigeria's State Security Services (SSS) and other government agencies. According to Ijayi, James Craig in the company's Louisiana office is the U.S. coordinator for the incident.

16. (C) A Chevron employee, Shane Gaborell told Pol-Econ Chief that he called Graham on his cellphone at around 9:30 AM on January 23. Gaborell said Graham told him that he had been taken "into the bush" and that he was being treated "O.K.". When Gaborell asked if there was anything he could do, Graham reportedly replied that they would "just have to let it run its course."

17. (C) David Harries of the British Deputy High Commission (BDHC) said the British defense attache in Abuja is going to speak to the Nigerian Ministry of Defense to urge restraint and caution against any precipitous rescue attempt.

COMMENT

18. (C) That Graham and Mirrlees were taken in broad daylight shows this kidnapping was planned and suggests that militant or criminal interests rather than community-driven concerns were behind the incident. It is as yet unclear whether the kidnapping was related in any way to the January 20 remarks

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by militants (Ref A) that they would begin to target U.S. and British citizens and interests. End Comment.
BROWNE